

Campus Wide Listening Session

“Enhancing Recruitment and Retention:

Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce for Women and Staff of all Backgrounds”

Nov. 12, 2024

What we heard

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

RECRUITMENT

Lack of Diverse Pools

- Everyone should have a fair shot with access and opportunity, but often we default to the people we are comfortable with which only reinforces the current demographics of the workforce.
- If there is no diversity at a higher level, it is difficult to influence people to join.
 - a recruiting committee with people from a very diverse background only helps so much.
- If we are hiring only those with experience or a degree, you might not get a diverse pool because the workforce may not always have those credentials, then WE are excluding diversity from the pool.
- When you need to make a quick hire because someone leaves and you have work waiting, a lot of best hiring practices goes out the window because you are making quick decisions and not being intentional.
- When jobs get posted – is it getting sent to programs, do they already have experience, is the pool already diverse? Requiring experience, without paying according for experience, with already marginalized populations is inherently exclusive.
- The political environment is very fraught and holding people accountable for diversity will be challenging in this environment.
- Institutional issues that do not support diversity and inclusion can be painful, especially if you don’t feel like you have agency to advocate for change.

Why is it That White Applicants Are More Likely to Apply for Jobs at UofL

- One recruiter checks the demographics of applicant pools against demographics of Jefferson County and reposts if the pool is not representative, they repost and get even more white applicants.
- There’s an elephant in the room – we refer our friends, hire their friends. Majority of staff is self-fulfilling prophecy – white women recruiting white women, instead of hiring based on strengths and qualifications.
 - It was said that is the first time in 25 years that they have heard a white woman confirm that.
- Generational wealth allows some of our workforce to get the advanced degrees that are required for many jobs at UofL.

Our environment is not as friendly as we like to think it is

- During a job candidates' interview, a candidate asked if there are single stall or transgender friendly bathrooms in a particular building and the person had to tell them that no, they would have to leave this building and go to a different building if they needed a single stall bathroom.
 - Signs have since been added to say they are transgender friendly, but we can't formally change the designation of the bathrooms to single stall.
 - This leads to a recruitment and retention issue for people who must leave their own building to go to the bathroom that is safe for them.
 - A trans participant affirmed that the signs don't guarantee their safety.
- We can't wait 2-3 months to get someone in a role because that can wreck a department. It's also an access issue for candidates who can't wait that long to start work.
- I think recruitment can be negatively impacted by having an overall lack of diversity. I wouldn't want to be the only woman on a team, so I can imagine that no one would want to be the only *fill in the blank* joining a team.
- People do their homework and don't even apply if they see it as a place that they won't succeed.

Making Assumptions

- People make off-hand comments that can influence whole committees.
 - I have heard hiring committee members make assumptions and practically rule out a candidate due to the address they applied from.
 - making assumptions that someone wouldn't want to move for a job when the search committee doesn't know that. That isn't a fair assessment. We are looking for skills and ability and not where people live when they originally applied.
- One participant noted a more than 30-minute conversation about how a candidate would just use the position to get into the university and wouldn't stay even before the candidate was interviewed – again making assumptions about the candidate.
 - Too often I hear "I think this candidate would be a good fit" which is language of bias.

Lack of Capacity

- I've been put into positions where I must make a hire with a long to-do list and a short time to do it. Without time and space, we lose.
- One of the challenges I've encountered in recruiting diverse people is a lack of staff capacity for strategic recruitment.
 - Our department has been historically understaffed so strategic recruitment of diverse and marginalized people tends to get lumped into the bucket of "too much extra work" and/or statements about there not being enough time to be strategic about our efforts. I find that this response is a mediocre excuse; however, as a manager, I also feel stuck in knowing how to move so many levels of bureaucracy to affect change.

RETENTION

Still waiting on Career Ladders

- We need to post the ladders ASAP. It is frustrating to see that pay scales are *so very low*.
- We have a success center that helps employees, but the university is not good at being transparent about how you can move up salary grades; we are still waiting to see the career ladders where people can identify how they can get upward mobility within the university.
 - career ladders are supposed to be online by the end of the semester and this person was assured that they are being prioritized by HR.
 - Another participant thought the ladders wouldn't be fully available until next October
 - look at what training is possible for those who have the aptitude but not the experience.
- This impacts folks in historically marginalized communities without advocates, it up to the individual to do figure out skill sets that are needed to advance, this is a burden.
- UofL has no transparency on how people can identify a career ladder and find upward mobility at the university. Without an encouraging and helping supervisor, they are done – it's a dead end.

Pay is a hindrance

- Underpaying people results in a workforce population that is not financially independent.
 - if you want to attract first-gen folks, single parents, etc. You can't recruit or retain people if they aren't paid enough to pay their bills.
 - Pay scales are low and it is hard to make a generous offer to anyone.
- People leave because of the sheer volume work that gets dropped on them.
- The faculty compensation study was highlighted for the new starting salary for library faculty, who were previously very underpaid.
 - The comp study did not heal equity issues.

Recruitment Can't Happen Without Retention.

- Diversity isn't showing up in our applicant pool because the reputation is already out that UofL has an unhealthy climate, high turnover, lack of diversity in the current workforce. We need to clean up our own house. People don't leave jobs; they leave toxic bosses and environments.
- As a supervisor, I wear all these hats, we're asked to do our own HR work. When I see my employees needed a raise, and my power stops there. That is impacting retention and affects certain populations more than others.

Hoarding Knowledge

- People hoard the knowledge and responsibilities that they feel make them indispensable to the unit.
 - Intimidated by new ideas, creates insecurities and fear of exposing employees for what they "really know"

Silos

- Departments are very isolated and don't talk. We're constantly re-creating the wheel, doing double duty around the university. Creating departmental collaborations and the culture of departments is so different from side to side.
- It is difficult to create templates for staff jobs
 - there is still not consistency across departments and units and to what classification those JDFs are assigned. There should be generic templates for job titles within a class that can then be tweaked for the needs of individual departments. JDFs sometimes underestimate the volume of work in a position.
- departments don't talk to each other (both internally and across departments).
 - Figuring out how things work is a challenge for new people. There seems to be a lot of duplication possibly because people don't know that others are doing the same or similar things.
 - different departments have different reputations for "good" or "bad" culture.
 - Grant-funded positions also bring special challenges for anyone who wants a long-term role.

Accountability

- The real lever for change is accountability.
 - Administrators are held accountable for business processes, but they are not held accountable for employee success and until that happens, there isn't going to be significant change.
- In COSW, a frequent issue that has come up for work-life integration is flexible work.
 - It's not just the policy, but it is the consistency of implementation and ongoing support.
 - There is a lack of training and support on managing remote teams.
 - How do you manage a team with a flexible work schedule?
 - How do you diversify long-term if you only have one opening a year?
 - Thinking through the ongoing support for reaching these goals is an important part of accountability.
- Employees also need to feel safe to go to supervisors with concerns and feel that their supervisors are not going to retaliate (this is how we can define emotional safety). We can't rely on people self-advocating if they don't feel this.

Success is not celebrated

- We don't celebrate faculty retention until 25 years! Go figure!

POSITIVE REMARKS

- The faculty compensation study positively impacted our department – I'm seeing positive changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HR Needs to Lead the Charge

- Would like to hear from the new VP of HR, (Darrell) speak to CODRE or at a community forum about these issues. He spoke in his interviews about ideas he has.
 - new VP of HR needs to be able to be show best practices.
 - next steps to using resources to share and enhance recruitment.
- We have community engagement goals, we need to tie into these organizations (NAACP, Vocational Rehab, etc.) for recruiting.
- Supervisors may know that someone working under them deserve a promotion. The supervisor's advocacy doesn't seem to carry any weight, and we are told by those above that there is no way to adjust. This impacts retention and affects some populations more than others.

Resources / Policies with Accountability

- Education and resources for people making the hiring decisions.
 - Create a resource group where people can share recruitment and retention ideas across the institution. We need to learn from each other.
 - If people across the institution are learning and using those ideas, it can't hurt.
- What is currently required to do for staff hires is not enough. There should be stronger recruiting training – maybe like STRIDE?
 - Have checks and balances for these processes to hold people accountable.
- More frequent training for supervisors on soft skills of leaderships
 - Provide resources and training for people on search committees.
 - We need to create good policy, hold people accountability, and report out on the hiring data.
 - Require someone at least one person on a search is from outside of your unit so you get an outside perspective.
- People are your greatest recruiting tool – when they have good experiences, they do the recruiting organically. Conversely, when the experience has been had – the story is usually shared. That is why climate is so integral to this topic.
- We need education and resources for people who are making the hiring decisions. We hear people say “I think this candidate would be a good fit” but that is coded language for bias.

Be a Trend Setter

- UofL should be a trend setter and work from our shared values versus what "the market" (an inherently racist structure in many regards) dictates? I don't understand the argument that we can't deviate from "the market".

Highlight Success

- Highlight the success that comes from having a diverse workforce, otherwise the status quo will wonder why representation matters.

- Praise and highlight successes that come out of having a diverse workforce to show the value.
 - Employee success, celebrating accomplishments, employee recognition are critical and don't seem to be the normal practice.